

again drawn up for an opening night and sentiment dictated that the same date, June 17th, and the same man, Leslie M. Frost, should be chosen. Once again public acknowledgement was made of all donations and help. Somerville and Laxton townships, as well as Victoria County had representatives on hand to accept the thanks of the Board. Also speaking that evening were Mrs. Janet Nowakowski, Victoria County Librarian, Frank Weldon, County Clerk, Mrs. June Thexton, Director of the Lake Ontario Regional Library Co-operative, Glen Hodgson, M.P.P., and Leslie M. Frost, now retired as provincial premier. Mrs. Francis Sartin, Board member, gave a resume of the past years progress and the author gave a report of what the Board hoped to accomplish in the future.

A special feature of the evening was the unveiling of a plaque in honour of Arthur C. Adair who had been one of the keenest supporters of the County Library and of our local library.

In the year and a half since the opening of the new addition, the Library has continued to improve under the care of a keenly interested Board and librarian. A book cart and a magazine rack have been added to the physical assets of the building, and many new volumes have been placed on the shelves.

Perhaps the most important event in the history of the Library, certainly the one with the most far-reaching and beneficial effects, was the formation of a County Public Library to replace the County Co-operative. The Norland Board was the first in the County to pass a resolution in favour of joining such a scheme and it campaigned in all the townships of North Victoria to ensure that these municipalities would forward resolutions to the County requesting the formation of the Victoria County Public Library.

Coming into effect the beginning of this Centennial year, 1967, the Victoria County Public Library, with its own Board, has now assumed responsibility for the various small libraries throughout the County insofar as maintenance, books and librarians' salaries are concerned. For the first time since its formation in 1902, despite the fact that it was called "Public", the Norland Association Library has truly become a Public Library with membership free to all ratepayers of the district.

The local Board has now become a Norland Library Committee, responsible for administering maintenance funds and making recommendations as regards most library matters. However the Committee can still raise money and continue to improve the building. It is to be hoped that the local residents will continue to assist (as they have done so generously in the past) to make the Norland Library one of the finest of its size and type in the entire province.

(5) ELLIOTT'S FALLS POWER HOUSE & THE RAVEN LAKE CEMENT PLANT

Perhaps the most exciting and promising event to occur in the northern townships was the formation of the Raven Lake Portland Cement Company. Incorporated by Letters Patent dated June 30, 1902, with an authorized capital of \$500,000.00, the company proposed to build a cement plant between the tracks of the old Toronto and Nipissing railway (then part of the Grand Trunk system), and the south shore of Raven Lake in the township of Bexley. Power to run the plant was to be generated at Elliott's Falls, north of Norland and about thirteen miles from Raven Lake.

Five thousand shares at \$100.00 each were issued and they sold rapidly; most of them going to big buyers and those responsible for the formation of the company. The original directors were:

Thomas Christie, Merchant, Toronto

Duncan Robertson, Contractor, Toronto

John Lucas, Contractor, Toronto—President

Thomas McLaughlin, Broker, Toronto—Secretary-treasurer

John McDonald, Contractor, Lindsay

Preliminary work began that year (1902). On August 16, 1902 council sold all of Lot 9, Con. 11 Laxton together with Elliott's Falls power rights for \$400.00. The company hired Charles L. Fitch to design the power house and supervise its construction. By raising Elliott's Falls dam a foot and a half and blasting three feet out of the natural dam which was downstream towards Norland, a head of water of twenty-one and one-half feet was obtained, sufficient to develop twelve-hundred horse power. Work began in earnest in 1903 as equipment was hauled from Cobocok railway station by wagon. A crusher was set up to provide crushed stone from rocks obtained on the property and sand was also obtained on the site. The building was made of concrete, most of which was poured in the winter of 1903-4. To enable work to proceed, the entire site was closed in by a temporary building made of poles sheathed with one-inch boards and covered with tar paper. Stoves and steam coils kept the temperature above freezing.

Many local men worked on this project along with several Italian labourers brought in by the company. The Italians had their own cookhouse, dining hall and sleeping quarters. The local men boarded at a dining hall operated by "Black Tom" Cooper, his wife and family.

In 1903 the council gave the company permission to erect a transmission line along the Cameron Road through Laxton, specifying that the poles must be of

cedar, at least 25 feet high, and must all be on the west side of the road and placed so as to cause no inconvenience to the public. It is said by older residents that the company offered to provide street lights for Norland in exchange for the right-of-way but the council decided to tax the right-of-way instead.

The powerhouse was equipped with two 350 kw generators providing 25 cycle current which was stepped up to 16,000 volts for transmission to Raven Lake. Each generator was direct driven by a bank of four twenty-five inch horizontal turbine wheels mounted on one shaft.

Meanwhile, at Raven Lake, a huge plant of stone and cement was being constructed. Designed by Robert F. Wentz of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, it was to be a six kiln plant of the most modern design, representing the latest ideas in the economic manufacture of cement. Scheduled to start operating about April 1904, the plant suffered growing pains which delayed the opening until the latter part of the year when it began operating with four one-hundred foot long kilns and an output of seven-hundred barrels of cement every twenty-four hours.

The raw material came from the bottom of Raven Lake which was covered with a deposit of marl ten to twenty feet deep. This limestone deposit was laid down by small shellfish in the dim past. A scow holding a dredge, a stone separator and an air compressor scooped the marl from the lake bottom. The marl then passed through the stone separator and was blown through a flexible eight-inch line to storage tanks at the plant. The line was supported on pontoons made of forty-five gallon drums and a wooden framework. Clay came in from Beaverton on flat cars and was dried, ground and stored in overhead bins. The kilns were coal-fired—the coal coming in by train. It was crushed, dried and powdered before going to the fire-boxes.

All the machinery was powered by electric motors. The power lines from Elliott's Falls entered a 25'x37' masonry substation at the west end of the plant where it was stepped down to 600 volts. In this building two men were electrocuted. On the night of May 9-10, 1906, Elias Liscombe accidentally touched a high tension switch and left the imprint of his hand burnt into the cement floor of the substation. His body crumbled to dust when it was raised off the floor. A funeral service was held in Corson's Siding Church and the body was then buried in Pine Grove Cemetery at Norland. On June 20, 1907, Kenneth Armstrong of Norland (married to a sister of Elias Liscombe) died of electrocution also.

The quality of the marl varied so greatly, some of it having too high a lime content, that a channel was dredged some seven-hundred yards into swamp where a suitable deposit was found. This was done with

equipment borrowed from the Essay Stone Crusher Company of Kirkfield. When the quantity of marl had been proven, the borrowed equipment was returned and the company then bought its own narrow gauge railway and dredge from Brantford Electric Light Company.

The plant operated for years and employed many local men. At the peak of construction some two-hundred men were employed on the site. After production started there were about thirty resident employees whose meals were served in a local boarding house. Supplies came in by horse and wagon from Victoria Road. The cement plant was instrumental in the Bell Telephone entering the area, a line was run from Gamebridge to Kirkfield to Raven Lake in 1903. From there it was extended to Coboconk in 1906, thus providing the incentive for several small local companies (the Norland Independent Telephone Company being one) to be formed. The company's product was of good quality and was named, appropriately, "Raven" Brand Cement.

Operations continued for some years. As with any firm there was evidently the odd bit of trouble. Perhaps the most serious difficulty was when low water cut power production at Elliott's Falls. It was found that the flow had been cut due to the construction of dams in Haliburton. To prevent a shutdown, a standby steam-powered generator was installed in a powerhouse at the plant, and this was used only in times of low water at Elliott's Falls.

Many are the stories that can be told by older residents who once worked at the cement plant—most of them involving liquor, as it was still very much a problem in those days. Perhaps we could repeat one story here. Tom Gostlin (who has a summer cottage at Norland) worked at the cement plant as a young man and was a hard drinker in those days. However he became inebriated one night and awoke in the morning to find himself stretched across the main line of the Grand Trunk Railway. The realization of what could have happened to him proved such a shock that he never became intoxicated again!

The company ceased operations in November of 1914 and there are many stories locally as to the cause of the closure. However the most authoritative version is that given by Jack Storey of Toronto, last chief engineer of the plant. A Free Trade Agreement with the United States allowed American cement to come into Canada at a price so low that Raven Lake just could not compete and stay in business. The plant machinery was sold to the Canada Cement Company and, in 1931-32, the steel beams supporting the roof were sold to the town of Haliburton, which was erecting a new hockey arena.

However, back at Elliott's Falls, with the initial construction over and the workers dispersed, things went

more smoothly. Richard "Dick" Day of Norland became chief electrician for the company and was in charge of the powerhouse. Telephone communication was provided between Elliott's Falls and Raven Lake on the same poles which carried the power lines. Dick Day remained there until 1916 when he enlisted and he was replaced by his son, Roy Day. By this time, of course, the cement plant was closed, but the entire operation was maintained for a few years in the hope of starting up again. In addition the powerhouse then supplied lights to the villages of Kirkfield and Victoria Road, and in later years was under the care of Worthy Ward, who lived in the little caretakers cottage on the grounds. In 1928 he moved down to the Ward farm so it must have been at that time that the generators were sold to a mine in Northern Ontario and the days of the powerhouse came to an end. In 1931 the plant and the falls were purchased by the Ontario Hydro but no power was ever again generated on the site.

Over the years, various names appeared as directors of the company. In addition to the original names mentioned, some of the more prominent were the Hon. George McHugh—Lindsay, J. H. Carnegie, M.P.P.—Coboconk, W. Sargent—Barrie, Joseph Maunders—Lindsay, Thomas White—Port Colborne, S. Gillies—Hamilton and Gideon Shortreed—Hillsdale. The last named gentleman became the largest shareholder and president of the company.

It will come as a surprise to many to learn that the Raven Lake Cement Company existed, on paper at least, right up until 1955. That year, no return was filed with the Companies Branch and Letters Patent was cancelled by the provincial government. The Raven Lake property, today, is owned by people with no connection with the company. While most of the land has grown up in trees and bush, the walls of this huge plant still remain and one can spend an interesting hour or so wandering about the site and speculating on the days when car loads of "Raven" Cement once left from the loading platforms, which can still be seen.

At Elliott's Falls the walls of the old powerhouse still remain though perhaps not for long, as the property has recently been purchased by the government for a Department of Lands and Forests park and what will be done with the old building is not known at the present time.

(6) THE TORONTO AND NIPISSING RAILWAY

Though this railway did not enter the municipality, it was the cause of a lot of negotiations and meetings involving local residents and the council, and for this reason alone deserves to be mentioned in these pages.

At the first session of the new Ontario legislature, 1867-68, following Confederation, the charter was granted for this proposed narrow-gauge railway. It was to run from Toronto to the North Bay area near Lake Nipissing. The promoters of the scheme set to work almost immediately to raise funds by selling shares and by soliciting bonuses from the councils of the various municipalities through which the line would pass. These bonuses were grants raised by the issue of debentures and given to the company in exchange for a bond guaranteeing such conditions as the municipality specified—location of line, stations, time of construction, etc. The Ontario government also gave financial assistance to railways for construction of right-of-way, assistance which varied in value according to whether the line passed through long sections of Crown Land or not.

A large shareholder in the company was the firm of Gooderham and Worts of Toronto, and the British manufacturer who was to supply the rolling stock also purchased a large block. The bulk of the shareholders, however, were ordinary investors. Many of them were from Toronto area. Also, people around Markham, Uxbridge, Stouffville and Goodwood—all towns through which the proposed line would run. A study of the shareholders list reveals only two names familiar to this area, Duncan McCrae of Bolsover and John Fell of Somerville.

Officials of the company were John Shedden—President, James Graham—Secretary-treasurer, William Gooderham Jr.—Managing Director and Edmund Wragge—Chief Engineer.

On April 11, 1868, Reeve Johnston Adair called the council together for a special meeting at Head Lake school house to prepare an estimate of the total production of the municipality, and of the potential exports—information required by the Toronto and Nipissing Railway Company. The directors of the company attended a public meeting in Coboconk on June 19th and gave such glowing reports and promises that our council members were convinced of the great benefits to be derived from a railway through our area. On July 4th, at another special meeting, the following resolution was passed:

"Moved by Andrew Houston, seconded by Alexander Campbell, That whereas, at a meeting of the Directors of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway Company, held at Coboconk on the 19th ult., a resolution was carried that the council of this municipality call a meeting of said council to adopt a By-Law to grant the sum of \$25,000 as a bonus to aid the said company in constructing the said Toronto and Nipissing Railway. Be it therefore resolved that this council do adopt the said By-Law and that a vote of the ratepayers be taken

on said By-Law at Head Lake school house, Laxton, on Thursday the 6th day of August next, as the law provides." Carried.

By-Law #55 was then prepared and given its first and second readings in readiness for the vote on August 6th.

A.A. McLauchlin was chiefly responsible for promoting the railway in Laxton as it would have meant a great deal to him to have a railway there so lumber from his mill could be shipped to markets in the south. The August 6th vote was favourable, but the council withheld third reading of the By-Law until it received a proper bond from the company guaranteeing that the line would pass through Norland, and that a station would be built there. Such a bond was not forthcoming and a year passed by with no further action taken on either side.

As concern mounted that the railway was not going to reach Laxton, the residents of the Norland area held a public meeting on January 15, 1870, and appointed George Rumney to go to the council with a resolution asking the council to send a delegation to Toronto to confer with the directors of the railway, and to make arrangements for the line to be extended to Norland. This was opposed by two councillors, William Roberts (Duck Lake) and Richard Rilance (Head Lake). There seems something prophetic in this, as the municipality has a record of western opposition to spending money on anything that could benefit Norland. Despite this opposition, a delegation, consisting of Reeve Johnson Adair, A.A. McLauchlin and councillor Alex Campbell, went to Toronto at once. Another special meeting was called for January 24th at the Pine Grove Hotel to hear the delegations' report (the details of this report are not known). However, all was not well as the council withdrew the By-Law granting \$25,000 to the railway.

Serious differences, of another nature, had also arisen in council resulting in the clerk being dismissed. However, the ratepayers must not have approved this action as Reeve Adair, along with the councillors Campbell and Houston were defeated and replaced at the election at year end, and the incoming council proceeded to reverse the two decisions. The clerk, Daniel Staple, was rehired and the following strange resolution was passed: "That the By-Law voted on by the ratepayers of this municipality on the 6th day of August 1868 granting a bonus of \$25,000 in aid of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway be now read a third time and passed." Carried. We say "strange" because the By-Law had already been cancelled, and also, though both minute book and By-Law book quote the \$25,000 figure, all evidence points to the fact that only a \$12,500 bonus was intended, and it was for that figure that deb-

entures were actually issued. The debentures bore interest at six percent or \$750.00 the first year. Compare this with the annual township levy around \$700 for those times and one has an idea of what this railway bonus meant to the taxpayer!

That these debentures were issued at all was due to a bit of underhandedness on the part of the T. & N. Dismayed when the 1870 council cancelled the debenture by-law, two directors of the company, Messrs. Laidlaw and Gardner, arrived in Norland for a public meeting in January 1871. There, they verbally promised that if Laxton granted them \$12,500 the line would be built to Norland and a station built there within six summer months of receiving the usual provincial construction grants for that section. It was on the strength of this meeting that the council issued the debentures. The required bond did not arrive until the end of the year, long after the company had received the bonus, and council was dismayed to discover that it was not as they expected.

At the inaugural meeting in January 1872, the council refused to accept the bond for two reasons: (1) only the township of Laxton was mentioned, not Laxton, Digby and Longford, and (2) No mention whatsoever was made of a railway line coming to Norland, or of a station being built here. It was unanimously agreed that A.A. McLauchlin should take the bond to the company's Toronto office and get a proper one made out. This he was unable to make the directors do.

Meanwhile construction was underway on the line itself. By July 1871 the rails had reached Uxbridge and contracts were let for the remainder of the way to Coboconk.

Balked in his attempt to get a proper bond, Mr. McLauchlin had one recourse left—the provincial government itself. On February 26, 1872 he directed a letter to the Hon. E. Blake, Premier, in which he briefly reviewed the situation and asked the Premier to force the T. & N. to enter Norland. Evidently having second thoughts on the matter, Mr. McLauchlin must have decided that a more complete explanation was in order, as he forwarded a second letter three days later. In this letter he described all past negotiations in detail. Once again he appealed to the province to withhold all construction grants from the company until the directors posted a proper bond agreeing to run a line into Norland.

Several letters were exchanged between the office of the Provincial Secretary and that of the T. & N., but the directors steadfastly denied any knowledge of such a promise. The result was that the government decided nothing could be done and, on April 8th, a letter was sent to Mr. McLauchlin expressing regrets that it was now too late to do anything about the matter. The To-

ronto and Nipissing entered Coboconk in the fall of that year and that was as far as the line ever got.

In 1875 and again in 1879, attempts were made to raise funds to extend the line to Minden or, failing that, to build a six-mile extension to Elliott's Falls and thus gain water connection to Minden, by means of a lock at Moore's Falls. Both times the scheme fell through.

The Toronto and Nipissing was a narrow gauge line of three foot six inches, running from Scarborough to Coboconk, a distance of eighty-seven miles. The longest structure on the line was the 478 foot long trestle over North-West Bay on Balsam Lake. When it entered Coboconk, all the settlers in Bexley were given a triumphant ride on flat cars decorated with evergreen boughs. In 1881 the T. & N. became part of the Midland Railway and a third rail was laid bringing it to standard gauge to conform with all other lines controlled by the Midland Company.

In early days the T. & N. used an unusual double headed locomotive complete with two boilers, two cow-catchers, etc., and with cordwood piled both sides of a central cab. The trip from Toronto involved frequent stops along the way to replenish the wood from piles beside the tracks. This old engine was named the Shedden in honour of the company's president, John Shedden. At one time it was a two-day trip to Coboconk, an overnight stop having to be made at Lorneville.

The coming of the railway made quite an impact on Coboconk. Grateful citizens even renamed the village Shedden—a name it retained from 1873 to 1880. A large modern hotel, named the Shedden House was built on the site of present day Riverside Motors—a hotel that was known as the most modern north of Toronto. No less than three hotels existed at once in the Bexley portion of Coboconk, all of them busy attending to the needs of travelling salesmen and people going north to Minden and beyond, for this now became the main route into that district via stage to Moore's Falls and by paddle-wheel steamer from there to Minden.

Meanwhile, Laxton and Digby continued to pay the debenture interest each year and put aside into a sinking fund an amount towards paying the debentures themselves. When 1888 rolled around, there was only \$5,500 in the fund to cover \$12,500 which was coming due that year. Special permission had to be obtained from the government to issue a new series of debentures to cover the remaining \$7,000.

Under the Midland Railway system, Lorneville became an important junction, where a large Y was constructed to enable Lindsay to Coboconk trains to change from the Lindsay-Midland tracks to the old T. &

N. Toronto to Coboconk tracks. In the 1880's it was about a two and a quarter hour trip to Lindsay, leaving Coboconk at 6:40 A.M. and arriving in Lindsay 9:25 A.M. The return trip was from 6:20 to 9:55 in the evening. By 1893 the Grand Trunk System had absorbed the Midland Railway, and in turn became part of the Canadian National System in 1923. Four different railways then have come into Coboconk over the old T. & N. right-of-way. The presence of the railway has added much to the economy of the district, especially to Coboconk, where limekilns and the Gull River Lumber Company mill flourished, due to rail transportation. The Raven Lake Cement plant was also made possible by the availability of a railway. One wonders what changes would have taken place in Norland had the line reached that village and established its terminus there.

In the early 1900's a trip from Toronto to Coboconk was a real experience. Up to Blackwater Junction the pace was tolerable. There, one had time for a sandwich and a cup of tea while awaiting the arrival of the Midland train, which took you on to Lorneville Junction and a trip around the Y for a meeting with the old "Coby Express" which was a mixed train and had to stop to shunt box cars around at every station. By the time it panted triumphantly to a stop at Coboconk station, it was nearly always midnight or later—although it was due about 10 p.m. The engine was run into the shed for the night where a night watchman kept steam up in readiness for an early morning departure. A manpower operated turntable was used to turn the locomotive around.

On June 26, 1932 the midnight train became a thing of the past, the service changing to a daytime run. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays the train arrived in Coboconk at 12:50 P.M. and departed for Lindsay at 2:30 P.M. arriving there at 5 P.M. in time to catch the night train to Toronto.

With the general decline of revenue on branch lines, the C.N.R. has progressively abandoned many of them and the Lindsay-Coboconk service has been gradually withdrawn. The last passenger service to Coboconk was on April 22, 1955. Intermittent freight service continued whenever a car had to be moved in or out of Coboconk, until March 30, 1965, when it too was curtailed. The rails were taken up from Coboconk to Lorneville that summer. It is hard to believe, but the late Cuthbert Sprung, who was township clerk from 1935 to 1949, once made the statement that the railway debentures issued by Laxton-Digby-Longford in 1871, and reissued in 1888, were finally paid off during the period he was clerk. Is it not ironic that a debt contracted to assist in the birth of a railway was barely paid off in time for the burial!